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disques

FOR JULY

1932

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“And we are but shadows of death and bitter sorrow. . .”

ONE of the main difficulties attached to recording work—at least in this country, where the fees paid musicians for such activities are generally forbiddingly high—has always been the assembling of the artists. To bring together a large symphony orchestra for a few hours in order to make records is a costly business, sometimes running into thousands of dollars. And similarly costly is the recording of eminent soloists, who often command sums equally as large. Plenty of musicians, indeed, have managed to make a very comfortable living out of their recording work alone. Perhaps in many cases the artists have been overpaid. Perhaps, in fact, recording fees in general are too high. But that is a question that can be argued at considerable length and without reaching any satisfactory conclusions. In a country so unbalanced as this one, where fabulous and ridiculous prices are still paid popular moving picture stars, even those without anything remotely approaching sound histrionic ability, and many other public characters whose popularity is based on something other than genuine merit,—in such a country it is not strange that prominent musicians, who presumably are subject to the same yearning for luxury and security as

the rest of us, should ask for and not infrequently get impressive sums for spending time before the microphone. It is an unfortunate system, full of unpleasant evils and defects, but it would require an excessive dose of optimism to believe that it could be changed overnight. Changes that work improvements are always notoriously slow in coming about. Before the matter of recording fees can be satisfactorily adjusted, so that it is equally pleasing to the artists, the manufacturers, and the record-buying public, drastic changes will obviously have to be made in the whole field of public entertainers, whether they be musicians, evangelists, football players, *filles de joie*, or politicians. Indications that such changes are likely to occur at some not too remote date in the future are not wholly lacking. But at the moment there is little that can be done (outside of writing space-filling editorials like this one) save to accept the situation as cheerfully and with as much grace as possible. Realizing all this, then, it is not hard to understand why American recording companies have been somewhat cautious—to put it with some politeness—in their approach to music that is new and unfamiliar. Music that is new and unfamiliar, they assume, and per-

haps rightly, is not likely to win its way into the hearts of any appreciable number of auditors, and the size and wealth of that body of musicians who take a serious intellectual interest in complicated and unfamiliar new music are not very impressive. The phonograph companies, aiming to make a profit on their records, cannot afford to take daring and expensive and maybe disastrous chances; too much is at stake. They have to be pretty certain in advance that their records will have some sort of a popular appeal. Compelled to confine themselves principally to those works for which there is a wide demand, it is only natural that they seldom record things out of the well worn paths.

And yet in spite of all this, the lists of the domestic companies are surely not bad ones. Eliminate the repressings from the European companies, and there still remains a not insignificant quantity of good records made in this country. One can, of course, easily pick flaws in the domestic lists. There are few pastimes more entertaining than that of speculating on the reason for this work's being recorded or the reason for that work's being coldly shunned by the manufacturers. And it is true that most of the familiar works that can be depended upon to enjoy a lively sale have been recorded by the local companies; it is these discs, in fact, that constitute the greater part of the American catalogues. But a good many pieces whose popular appeal is extremely dubious have likewise been recorded. Examples, of course, are not precisely numerous, but a little investigation will reveal a not discreditable list of them. Strawinski's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, for instance, is not a work exactly calculated to achieve widespread popularity, though in recent years it has gradually won its way into the regular symphonic repertoire. And many more examples, just as surprising, can be discovered in the Victor catalogue. Many, too, are in the Brunswick and Columbia lists. The former has sponsored the recording of the Rachmaninoff Second Symphony, among other things, and the latter has achieved the distinction of being the first phonograph company in the world to record all three of the Brahms violin sonatas.



The policies which govern the domestic companies are apparently somewhat similar to those which actuate, or formerly actuated, the Metropolitan Opera Company. One would like to see them emulate the policies of the Philadelphia Grand Opera Company, a young but very much alive organization that has achieved some striking performances in the past couple of seasons. The Metropolitan, as everybody knows, seldom takes any chances, and indeed it was its very conservativeness—carried to excessive lengths—that was largely responsible for the embarrassing problems with which it was lately faced. When it decided to overwhelm its customers with a novelty, and thus break the monotony of the usual Verdi, Donizetti, Puccini and Wagner routine performances, it commonly was something like *Schwanda* or *Boccaccio* that was chosen, works pretty certain to keep the box office busy. The Philadelphia Grand's record during the past few seasons offers a refreshing contrast. This organization has been considerably more daring. In the past couple of years it has produced, in addition to the regular series of more familiar operas, such works as Berg's *Wozzeck*, Chavez' *H. P.*, and Strauss' *Electra*. And these, it should be noted, were offered for Philadelphia audiences, not for those in New York, where it would be assumed that there is a measurably larger public for such works. It required some courage and a great deal of enterprise to produce

these works, for the public response obviously could not be determined beforehand with any degree of accuracy.

One would, of course, like to see the recording companies whole-heartedly adopt such policies, but it is easy to see why they don't, especially during these troubled days. After all, their business is to make money, and lofty principles and high ideals are not always inseparably associated with the art of making money. Until the number of music lovers with money to spend is greatly increased in America, or until some generous millionaire anxious to put his money to a good use decides to finance some worthwhile recording ventures, it would be unreasonable to expect more from the companies than they are now doing.



Recently, however, an experiment has been tried which may solve the problem very prettily, and to the satisfaction of everyone. If properly utilized, it should both make the manufacturers the profits they require and give collectors the music they want. That experiment, not something altogether new, is the recording of actual performances. But if the idea itself is not new, the results recently attained certainly are. In Europe this method has been tried several times, but seldom with much success. One recalls, for example, the Spanish H. M. V. recording of the *Missa Solemnis*, the Electrola recording of various excerpts from *Die Meistersinger*, and the Italian H. M. V. recording of excerpts from Rimsky-Korsakow's *Tale of Czar Saltan*. All of them were interesting, but none could compare with the best examples of records made specially for the phonograph at regular recording sessions. The balance was poor, the music, almost always blurred and indistinct, faded to the point of total inaudibility, there were objectionable noises, often so loud as to drown out the music, and all in all the effect was far from pleasing.

The RCA Victor Company has lately tried a similar experiment, but on a much larger and more ambitious scale. When Arnold Schönberg's *Gurre-Lieder* was given its first American performance in Philadelphia last spring, microphones and recording apparatus were installed in the concert hall, and all three performances were recorded—both for standard and long-playing records—just as they were given. Both sets are now available.

They are not, to be sure, entirely free from flaws, but it is encouraging to note that the major faults of the sets are not serious ones; that is, they can readily be corrected in future recordings of actual performances. The most objectionable thing about the standard set of the *Gurre-Lieder* is the manner in which the record sides are distributed. The vast majority of the breaks between the record sides are pretty bad, and some are atrocious. It almost seems as if the worst possible places were chosen to stop one record side and begin another. Often a singer is cut short in the middle of a note, and many orchestral passages are awkwardly snapped off with disconcerting swiftness. The effect is most unpleasant, and the final result is that in many cases the music at the beginning and ending of the record sides is irretrievably spoiled. The question of bad record breaks has often been discussed, and anyone tolerably familiar with recorded music can easily cite numerous examples of music on discs marred by ill-chosen distribution of the record sides. But it is no exaggeration to say that in this respect *Gurre-Lieder* surpasses them all.

This trouble is avoided to a large extent in the long-playing version of the work.

The latter set requires only seven 12-inch records, while the standard occupies fourteen 12-inch discs, so that there are only half as many record changes in the long-playing as there are in the standard. Moreover, the breaks are much more intelligently made in the long-playing set; thus in this respect at least the latter is infinitely the superior.

Probably the reason that the standard set is so poorly divided is that the recording engineers, not experienced in the recording of actual performances, had to work unusually rapidly and without adequate foreknowledge of the score itself. When they recorded the work on the long-playing discs, they were allowed more leeway. Unhampered by a limited number of grooves at their disposal, they could make the breaks whenever they wanted to. One can no more squeeze extra grooves on the surface of a standard record than one can squeeze extra lines on a printed page. But much finer grooving is possible on the long-playing discs, and as all the groove space is not utilized on the later records, the engineers could afford to wait for more or less plausible places to break the record sides. Every second had to be observed with the standard discs, but with the long-playing a minute more or less made no appreciable difference. In the future the experience they gained in recording *Gurre-Lieder* should prove of great value to the engineers. By timing the rehearsals and carefully calculating the length of the score of the work to be recorded, they should have no difficulty in dividing the record sides at least as well as they do at regular recording sessions. It is thus by no means a major problem and ought quickly to be solved.



But the above-mentioned fault is really the only serious criticism that can be made of the recording of the *Gurre-Lieder*. Otherwise, it is magnificently done and constitutes a genuine triumph for the recorders. The recording of the voices, orchestra, and chorus is amazingly realistic, and in fact the Philadelphia Orchestra has never surpassed the best parts of these records even in its most successful recordings made at special recording sessions. The members of the audience, victims for many years of Stokowski's rigorous lessons on proper concert hall etiquette, apparently behaved themselves admirably during the performances of the cantata, for there is very little coughing or rustling of program notes, and what little there is is surely not offensive.

Gurre-Lieder, then, makes it abundantly plain that a great field is open to the manufacturers in recording actual performances. It may not be the ideal way to record, and perhaps in some ways the usual methods employed at regular recording sessions make for better reproduction. But since the *Gurre-Lieder* set turned out so felicitously, there is every reason to believe that future attempts will turn out similarly well, and maybe even better. And as the awkward financial conditions of the country make it practically impossible for the companies to hold many special recording sessions, it is surely better to have recordings of actual performances than no recordings at all. Besides, the advantages of this method far outweigh the disadvantages, and most of the latter, indeed, as was indicated above, can easily be disposed of with a little study and preparation. By continuing this policy, the manufacturers should be able to record a great deal of music, and since the expense is much lower, they would be justified in recording some of the more advanced

and less familiar music. It becomes increasingly evident, indeed, that in that direction lies the brightest future for the phonograph. One of the fine things about the recording of actual performances is that the cost ought to be considerably lower than that for regular sessions, and hence the chances the companies always run on producing an unsuccessful set are greatly reduced. Realizing this, they should lose their timidity and become more venturesome and less cautious in their quest for suitable recording material. With less to lose, and perhaps everything to gain, they ought to set about the recording of a great many of the more important concerts given in the United States. The field is almost illimitable. Should the records not sell well, that would not be disastrous, for the financial loss would be comparatively small, and on the other hand it is not unlikely that a much larger public willing to buy records of new music will be discovered than has hitherto been suspected. With *Gurre-Lieder* an excellent beginning has been made. Next winter's concert seasons in the large musical centres ought to yield additional recordings even more interesting and valuable.



Of interest to record collectors in the Philadelphia vicinity is the announcement that on the evening of June 25, at Robin Hood Dell in Fairmount Park—where the Philadelphia Orchestra Summer Concerts are held,—the RCA Victor Company will give a phonograph concert devoted to Schönberg's *Gurre-Lieder*. Leopold Stokowski will discuss the music, and the records, made at the recent public performances of the work, will be played on special equipment.



Among the articles scheduled for early publication in *Disques* are:

"The World of the Phonograph," by *Paul Rosenfeld*

"Brahms's First Sextet," by *Daniel Gregory Mason*

"Music in a Summer Garden," by *R. D. Darrell*

"Aaron Copland," by *Isaac Goldberg*

"Wanda Landowska," by *Nicolas Slonimsky*

SUBSCRIPTIONS, INDEX AND BOUND VOLUMES

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CODE

The first letters in the record number indicate the manufacturer and all records are domestic releases unless the word **IMPORTED** appears directly under the number: B-Brunswick, C-Columbia, CH-Christschall, D-Decca, EB-Edison-Bell, FO-Fonotipia, G-National Gramophonic Society, HO-Homocord, O-Odeon, PA-Parlophon, PD-Polydor, R-Regal (English), and V-Victor.

"Gurre-Lieder"*

Portrait of Arnold Schönberg as a Young Man

By JOSEPH COTTLER



Those of us who for a decade or more have regarded Schönberg as at least one of the most significant of present day musicians, who have taken to heart the creed of atonalism and its ideal of the greatest possible generalization of musical form, will greet this advent of the master on discs with some perplexity. It is human and pardonable to be delighted with the vindication in the eyes of the world of a pioneer at whom so much abuse has been flung. It is a relief to ourselves. But save for personal identity and a few scattered clues, the composer of *Gurre-Lieder* and our Schönberg are not the same. Ironically the recorded work is in no way representative of Schönberg's position. We must take the consolation we require as faithfuls from the fact that this Schönberg the public will adore; and adoring him and taking pleasure in him will be grateful to his genius and respectfully patient in following him along his newer and more difficult path.

The *Gurre-Lieder* was created in the first decade of the present century, begun when Schönberg was twenty-six, in the fullness—even the corpulence—of German romanticism; when the idealism of Schubert and Schumann had produced as its fullest effect the tonal skyscrapers of the two Richards, Strauss and Wagner. It was a time when the dry olden category of Being had endued itself with blinding beauty, when the exploration of self was an overwhelming charm, when words now disreputable like "eternity" or "infinity" were busy, when the soul was the mysterious visitor and not yet the function of body, when chords of the ninth excited and the chromaticism of Wagner may have parted friends.

These, of course, are some of the features of what we call romanticism. Their suggestion is helpful in recovering a breath of the intellectual climate that nourished young Schönberg, and, more particularly, evoked the *Gurre-Lieder*. Moreover, the general current of ideas and sentiments in which the artist swam vigorously was reinforced by the fact of his youth. The subjectivism of the romantic mood, the self-involution and invitation to the soul, is itself native to the organism in its first conscious outlook on experience. To this attitude of intensity the intellectually unassessed breeds concepts of the strange, expressed in dramatic changes of key, pitch, interval, and mystic event; while the response to passion (the unsatisfied) is by an acute sense of values in color and tone. So it happens that suffering is born of self-consciousness and that literary and plastic ideas—more immediate reactions—propose the musical.

* GURRE-LIEDER. (Arnold Schönberg) Twenty-eight sides. Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski, with Rose Bampton (Contralto), Jeannette Vreeland (Soprano), Paul Althouse (Tenor), Abrasha Robofsky (Bass), Robert Betts (Tenor), Benjamin de Loache (Speaker), Princeton Glee Club, Fortnightly Club and Mendelssohn Club. Fourteen 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-127. \$28. Also available on long-playing records. Seven 12-inch long-playing discs in album. Victor Set LM-127. \$21.

How must have appealed to young Schönberg, then, the sequence of poems by the Dane, Jans Peter Jacobsen, singing the medieval saga of the illicit love of King Waldemar and Tove in his castle at Gurre. Evil, in the shape of the queen and a Christian sense of sin, rob Tove of life. Overwhelmed with despair, Waldemar curses God and is condemned with his henchmen to wander the skies in a mystical hunt from sunset to dawn. The sun brings peace and the voice of Tove merged with Nature. Finally the spirit triumphs. Nature—Tove, Love—redeems the punishing hand of God and the curse of Waldemar, even as the love of Marguerite in Goethe's version of Faust.

This story, with its heavy charge of symbolism, gave Schönberg a perfect opportunity to exploit the musical idiom he so shared with his day. The gigantic orchestra of the type of Bruckner's, Mahler's, and to a smaller degree Wagner's, serves him for the sensuous and detailed display, the panoramic color of his plot. He lays out carefully his instrumentation to the detail of "a large iron chain," and adds five solo voices, three four-part male choruses, a mixed chorus in eight parts, and a speaking voice to a total of audible sound perhaps greater than that of all the rest of his work. The tonal means are swollen to meet the needs of the most overheated imagination—not a bubble of gas without outlet. Furthermore, since the chief ideas to be worked out are literary, the composer represents them by the motif (*cf.* Wagner) over the orchestra's statement of which the singers exult and sigh independently.

The result is unsurpassably rich and sweet, for, to parallel Schönberg's recklessness of expression, the composer at all times uses almost all the descriptive machinery he has set up. The score is blaringly thick. One feels that the space around the blossoming themes, wild with growth to the minutest interstice, would be fairer for weeding. The tonal energy given to the literal allusions of dancing angels, yawning graves, and the twittering of nature, one would reserve rather for the essential idea. As it is, the frequency of climaxes, glissandi, tremolandi, and Straussian flourishes; the tumbling descents and upward surges; the repetition of constant canonic echo in the distribution of voices; the expansion and detail, in short, levels rather than heightens the effect of the agony. The lack of rhythmic relief mars especially the first part and the great publicity, besides impairing the tension, blurs the outlines of the structure.

It is chastening to reflect that the *Gurre-Lieder* was in the vanguard of its musical day. But now for all its charm, and that it still has in large measure, it is undoubtedly no longer a vital work. It is far too tender and sensitive a plant for our present climate. The state of our world is too harsh. Yet to whom it does speak, and in its own time its accents must have been universal, it speaks with force. The lovely motives alone, their skilful interaction and transformations in sonorous bravura to fit the text, above all the genius and aspiration of the young composer, are enough to sway the listener. The erotic thrill and the egotistic splendor in general, the anguish and the faith, reach home with such conviction that the most skeptical must pull himself up with effort to say: "No, it is not true—I must not listen." Skeptics of the right kind, however, are rare, and the popular success of the work is certain. It will continue for many years to overshadow the real greatness of Schönberg.

It appears that the composer interrupted his work on the *Gurre-Lieder* which lay unfinished until some ten years had elapsed. That fact helps to establish the evidence of clues to the later Schönberg in the last part of the work. This evidence is interesting:

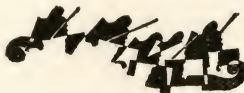
In one of the later songs of the cycle, the editor of the piano version of the score indicates that the keys involved in a certain chord are to be depressed without striking. That is, the damper on those keys is to be lifted and the strings allowed to vibrate for the sake of their overtones alone. This is significant. Schönberg is after, not the express vertical scale of tones, but rather the harmonic activity implicit in the single ground tone or voice. Now the harmonic style of writing, the style of most of the *Gurre-Lieder*, disperses the harmony of the voices. This dispersion is express. That is the reason for the large orchestra. The instrumentation must be adequate to enforce by sound the system of overtones. But where we forgo sounding the natural ladder of a tone, the effect is firmer and its character more intimate. The limit of approach of this manner of writing is the completely contrapuntal, the classical, which indeed describes Schönberg's present work, and distinguishes tendentially the last part of the *Gurre-Lieder*.

Add to this the speaking voice which relates so weirdly the spectral hunt of Waldemar, and the conclusion is strong that Schönberg is on his way to *Pierrot Lunaire* and the supreme piano suites. The legend of Waldemar and his deliverance from self to the grandeur and religious peace of the cosmos symbolizes Schönberg's own career as artist delivered from the too-personal beraptured *Gurre-Lieder* to the condensation, the universals of his recent work. It is in these products of his maturity that he finds the masterly poise between inner and outer, aspiration and experience, expression and its medium.

The Recording

I cannot think of any that has surpassed it either in clarity of color or tonal range, and that despite the tremendous volume of sound to transact. Recorded music cannot improve on the original performance and the fault of this one lay in the weak choral work. It is regrettable also that the nuisance of breaks is especially bad here, aggravated doubtless by the fact that the recording was made at the time of the public performance. Most of the time the break cuts a note in half, by which flaw the succeeding disc begins with an alarming pop. The singers are in splendid voice except for Mr. Paul Althouse who gropes about for his notes and has more than his share of difficulty with the intonation.

Blessings are not unmixed. Mr. Stokowski, the old crusader, begins the performance by recounting the story of the legend, and shows on his piano what one is to listen for.



Nicolas Slonimsky

And the New American Composers

By ISAAC GOLDBERG

"The old beauty is no longer beautiful, and the new truth is no longer true." Julian, in Act II, of *Caesar's Apostasy*. Part I of "Emperor and Galilean," *A World-Historic Drama* by Henrik Ibsen.



A few months ago the cables of the Associated Press flashed a stick or two of musical news across the ocean from Berlin to New York. A concert devoted exclusively to the left wing of American composers—both the Americas—had been greeted in the German capital with laughter, a few hisses, and a veritable symphony of key-whistling. In this, our era of Yale keys, we on this side should find it difficult to answer a modernistic program with a like charivari; our keys, for the most part, have solid ends. Besides, though we are generous with applause, we withdraw usually from the expression of our displeasure. Yet certainly the ambiguous keys of American modernist composition may conceivably call, in specific instances, for an answering modernism whistled across the orifice of the house-key. And it is not at all unlikely that a composer or two, listening to this sibilant manifestation, bethought him to include in his next score—in addition to the fly-swatters, nutmeg graters and other articles of the lawn and the cuisine—the humble or garden variety of *clavis domestica*.

On one point, however, the critics were undivided, and in this the German clan were quite unanimous with the reviewers who had sat before these concerts in Paris and with those who were shortly to hear them in Budapest: the young conductor was a remarkable fellow. There was no faking to his modernism; he knew his scores—at times immense heaps of ill-digested notes—in every detail from piccolo to double-bass. He conducted with a firm, confident stroke, now and again beating odd measures with one hand and even with the other. He had an ear of abnormally acute sensitivity. At every moment he was master of his men, though they were the resident orchestra, to whom he had been introduced for the first time but a few days before, and he had come thousands of miles to lead them for the brief hours of a concert or two.

The musicians themselves, at first loud in their laughter at the strange sounds that they were bidden to play, had been quickly won over by the imperturbable self-confidence of the youthful leader. Carelessly they attacked their parts; what, in such a din of dissonance, could a misplaced chromatic mean? Who would detect it? Not even the composer, for surely he hadn't *heard* every note in those thickly forested staves. Suddenly, to their amazement, they were hearing this Bostonian rap for silence. "The gentleman at the fourth desk of the first violins is playing D sharp instead of D natural in measure 56. Let's have it again, *meine Herren*." And when they had it again, that mischievously interpolated sharp had become naturalized.

As I read the press report, and later conned the clippings from the European

newspapers, I could not repress a laugh. For I had seen the gentleman in question try out the same tricks with domestic orchestras, and in a trice win the respect of his musicians that could not otherwise have been captured through weeks of routine rehearsing. I could see the slightly malicious smile that overflows his lips at such a time, and fairly feel the childish pleasure he himself felt in the exhibition. Though he is well on the way to forty, married to a well-known art critic of Boston, and has exhibited other tokens of undoubted maturity, there is still much of the child about him. He is excessively fond of stunts: he would rather play a Chopin étude with an orange in his right hand (a "special orangement" I have called it, or "an orangétude") than perform without benefit of the citrous fruits; he admires Barnum, and believes that in every successful public entertainer there is, more or less subtly concealed, a trace of that showman's blood; he likes, on visiting foreign countries—and he has been, in his day, a veritable Wandering Jew—to learn the language on the boat and try it out on the first native to appear; having absolute pitch himself, he eagerly challenges others who are similarly gifted, and greets their mistakes—and his own—with the glee of an Archimedean "Eureka!"

All of this, it is easy to believe, may be a mechanism thrown up by a brilliant mind in defense of, and in counterbalance to, its native brilliancy. For, often we may be the victims of our finer, rather than of our baser, qualities. The man, of course, has a needle-point wit rather than a deep sense of humor; he is far stronger on the intellectual than on the emotional side. This helps to explain not only his pastimes but his more sober pursuits. It explains, surely, his addiction to musical modernism.

It is time to give him a local habitation and a name: Mr. Nicolas Slonimsky, now a naturalized American citizen, born in Russia, wanderer by necessity and by occasional choice over the face of Europe, the United States and Cuba, scion of an illustrious Russo-Jewish family, resident at last in Boston, where—when he consents for a while to stay put—he leads the life of a writer, a composer, a lecturer, an accompanist of rare attainments who is much sought-after, and conductor of the Boston Chamber Orchestra.

II

When I first met Slonimsky, some six years ago, he had just come to Boston from Rochester. At Rochester he had been employed in the Eastman School of Music, whither he had hastened from a war-torn Europe. There, teaching, directing, wise-cracking, stunt-playing, and what not else, he had begun to perfect himself in English through the librettos of Gilbert and Sullivan. The man, among many other things, is a mathematician, fond of discovering formulas whether in life or in music; he has also the soul of a grammarian and a philologist, and reads technical treatises as other persons read novels. In any larger sense of the word—and it is an important word—he is as much the scientist as the artist, with just a trace of affectation in his suspicions of romanticism and artistry. Again, you see, the fellow predestined to modernistic propagandism.

He had been brought to Boston as the secretary and companion of Serge Koussevitzky, who returns to the Hub this autumn for his ninth season as head of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The work, though at first fascinating, proved to be too limited for Slonimsky's expansive and ambitious nature. Boston, after all, was

the quondam Athens of American culture. It was the habitat of the cultured Boston *Evening Transcript*, to write for which is the goal of all the journalists on our littoral. And surely enough, because he had something original to say, and was fast mastering the language, Slonimsky soon became a regular contributor to the music pages of that intellectual newspaper. At the city library, in the halls of the State's lecture rooms, his voice began to be heard—at first in a heavily Russianized English—discanting in witticisms upon the secrets of the new music. He played his own illustrations, of course, and acquired very readily the accents of our native jazz, which is in its modest way a token of modernism. He became very popular with elderly females and young ladies. (Why is culture so often declined in the feminine?)

There were other plans afoot. Slonimsky had written a ballet in Rochester—*The Prince Goes A-Hunting*. As a kid playing in European cabarets he had done minor piano pieces that he guards most secretly today, lest he be suspected of once having cherished melodious emotions. As a means of learning English he had made, when first coming to these shores, a passionate study of our magazine advertisements—an excellent method that does not seem to have occurred to our pedagogues. Well, many of these advertisements in the *Saturday Evening Post* he proceeded to *set to music*, in a strange combination of recitative and aria. One must hear him sing them to appreciate their full potentiality of fun and occasionally tonic vulgarity; they make first-class musical parody.

So that when Slonimsky turned seriously to composition in the smaller forms he brought to his task a highly unusual armamentarium of technique. One who has heard him accompany singers in recital, and felt the admirable quality of his playing in the productions of the romantic school, will understand that in the head of this modernist there is more room than he will acknowledge for the heart of the romantic. And one will understand, too, why the writing in his own songs is so original, so sensitively adapted to vocal and pianistic requirements. His song, *My Little Pool*, is to me one of the finest pieces of its kind that has come out of our contemporary America. Not because it is written in a special style that calls for only black keys in the left hand and white keys in the right, achieving in this bi-tonality a succession of uninterrupted consonances; this is a style that Slonimsky developed out of his fondness for stunts, and which he has put to excellent use in his series for piano entitled *Studies in Black and White*,—a highly original production that combines his wit and his technical skill into matter of intrinsic worth. No. *My Little Pool*, and a few of its companions—Slonimsky has set verses by Oscar Wilde, poems by Russians, lines by lesser Americans,—achieve almost-perfection in musical atmosphere. His piano pieces for children stand likewise among the most intelligent musical juvenilia that we have had in recent years.

Slonimsky's songs have been sung by Roland Hayes; his piano compositions have been played by George Copeland; Jascha Heifetz has had on his list violin pieces by our friend. If the man were to concentrate upon composition he could—perhaps he will—make a definite place for himself with a definite Slonimskian style. That style would be characterized by an alert melodic line, pungent harmonies in unhackneyed progression, succinct patterns, the microcosmic finish of the *caméo*.

But Slonimsky, you see, is a one-man conservatory. He plays the music, he writes it, he lectures on it,—and he conducts it.

III

Slonimsky as a conductor cultivates the same style that characterizes his compositions. He knows that the functions of a conductor are not only those of fashion-plate, preserver of the past in the brine of routine, drillmaster. Once he wrote an article making out that conductors were human *débris* from the shattered structure of romanticism. It was the extreme statement of a valid criticism that would not so much abolish conductors as strip them of their histrionic irrelevancies. Yet friend Nicolas will admit that the conductor, though his real work is done during rehearsals, has a useful place at the concert as an actor, as a performer trading upon his personality. And he knows, too, that the conductor is also the editor, as it were, of an aural magazine. He need not believe that everything he plays is a masterpiece; in addition to keeping the repertory alive, he must let his intelligent audience hear what is going on in the world of contemporary composition, even when that contemporary striving is not always, or even often, of primary importance. Within the sphere of the new striving, Slonimsky—as head of the Boston Chamber Orchestra, an organization composed of members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra—has chosen to devote himself to modernism. It is thus that he has become the champion of many composers from South and North America, playing them in this country and in Cuba, and latterly introducing them, during an exciting tour of three months, to the musical capitals of Europe.

They are a motley crew—Charles Ives, Edgar Varèse, Alejandro Caturla, Henry Cowell, to name but a few at random—seeking to express in a highly personalized idiom an area of experience that they feel with peculiar intensity. Now it is the more recondite Americana that an Ives captures in a quasi-Strawinskian idiom long before he has heard or heard of the multi-faceted Igor; now it is an expatriate confiding arcana to his staves in Paris, or a young Cuban adapting the native rhythms to modernist theory and practice; again, the super-theorist Cowell experimenting with new sonorities and dynamics. Naturally, much of this is not only over one's head; it is beyond one's ears. Yet at the core is a kernel of authenticity, and it is this kernel that Slonimsky—who is not at all unaware of the non-musical, sensational character of many of these pages—impetuously seeks. Which reminds me that, to his other activities he adds that of program-writer. There is nothing conventional about his annotations. He likes to spear a composer upon a phrase; to lecture the auditor in print, as it were, before he lifts the baton for the music—and the occasional din—of the performance.

About this conductorial activity there is nothing arid; and, for that matter, when the task calls for it, Slonimsky distinguishes himself with Mozart and Brahms, or, as in one of his Parisian concerts, with Bela Bartók, the Hungarian composer himself at the piano. One good custom, as the half-forgotten Tennyson wrote, can corrupt the world. Slonimsky is all for growth and variety as against the corruption of even our most sanctified musical customs.

It may be a small garden that he tends—a garden full of exotics and strange, heady perfumes. But it is a garden that he has made, by understanding, by advocacy, and by untiring activity, his own. Amid his numerous other pursuits, Candidely, he cultivates it.

Liberal Listening

By DOROTHY E. NICHOLS

Music-lovers do not love all music. Individuals make their classifications, some on grounds of preference and prejudice, some historically by periods, some by temperament. The academically-minded like to divide music into two kinds, classic and romantic, and tie themselves in knots trying to maintain the distinction. The connotation which they give to the word "classic" is practically lost on the contemporary layman who is apt to think of it as in opposition, not to "romantic," but to "modern." Classic music and modern music are terms accepted by musicians and it would be a surprise to Strawinski to find himself on a record-broadcast entitled the "Classical Hour."

But the radio recognizes only one distinction, "classic" as opposed to "jazz." To the broadcaster "classical" is anything that is not "popular." This pair of words still further muddles our sense of values. If we would apply the same adjectives to art which we use in determining the standards in manufacture, we would say "cheap" and "expensive"; we might then desire the best. Whatever the terms used, the radio has adopted the classification of the one who said, in an argument over the merits of jazz, that there are only two kinds of music: good and bad.

A "liberal" is one who listens with appreciation to all good music. This would seem to be a definition of "music-lover," but there are few actually who set their limits as wide. The conservatives, not the liberals, make up the majority of most audiences.

The conservative listener may be represented by one more conscientious than most, who was glad he had attended a program of modern music because "now he'd heard it, thank God! and wouldn't have to listen to it again."

It is lazy-mindedness that makes conservatives. They stay where they are because it is easier than to set out for unknown lands. Most of us are conservatives; it is more comfortable. Conservative listeners find in music a solace and a comfort, a pleasant sound in the ears, which, shutting out the world, inspires soothing fancies; they are apt to say they like music played softly.

There are also conservatives of a higher musical intelligence. They have a good stock of knowledge, a genuine love of classical music. Yet is it a profound understanding? I suggest that their listening, intellectual though it may be, is concerned with the surface of the music. When their ears are attacked by Stokowski's Philadelphia Orchestra playing contemporary Americans, they are repelled by the unfamiliar idiom, the strange, queer sounds, because they are hearing the surface.

There is a listening that goes deep into music, seeking the hidden core. Whatever this is called, the personality of the composer, or his message, or a revelation of truth, it is the music's soul. If a listener says that he cannot get anything out of strange new music, when he is supposed to have a comprehension of the old, he is listening to the strange surface and not to the soul. If he cannot hear the composer's expression of emotion in new guise, he probably is incapable of distinguishing between the individualities, for instance, of Haydn and Mozart. It is impossible to determine this for he has absorbed accumulated criticism and opinion on the

artists of the past. He has no such fund to draw on when he meets the present. He may sincerely wish to appreciate his own day, but never having grasped this inner listening, he cannot get anything out of music until he can comprehend it as a familiar form.

For the most part the conservatives cry with Horatio:

"Oh, day and night, but this is wondrous strange!"

But they do not hear Hamlet's reply:

"And therefore, as a stranger give it welcome."

They have few defenders of their attitude. In an evolutionary world those who will not recognize the law of change are dismissed with indifference. It is accepted that they are blind when they cannot see that if the future is to have a past we must have a present. They have no champions, but they remain in the majority.

II

"The shocks and changes" which Robert Frost says "we need to keep us sane" are administered with zest by the radicals, though whether their intention is to keep us sane is sometimes doubted. They would form new music out of nothing that has been before. They would cut loose from the past. Have we not all felt the wish that we could be born without parents and raised without environment!

Nothing would seem to be more easy to define than this difference between a radical and a conservative. The latter feels that Beethoven, having satisfied the human heart, is sufficient for all time. The radical jeers that "nothing was written between the B minor mass and *Sacre*."

Note the B minor mass. Most radicals admit Bach. Some prefer to descant upon the modernity of Palestrina. Some jump to another level of culture and bring back Oriental scales, while a few take a Nijinsky-leap and land among the tom-toms of Africa. This brings us to the odd conclusion that the difference between a radical and a conservative is that the radical finds his sources farther back,—a conclusion which produces the sensation that our first hand-crossing piano piece gave us.

But this inconsistency between the radical's theory and action is the outcome of a natural and necessary process of growth. "After death," says Shaw, "there is a descent to hell and then a resurrection for the most celebrated of the immortals." (Barrie is in Purgatory now.) Each generation has to push aside the structure built by the one before to have room to build its own. When the structures have been most towering the push has to be violent. When harmony has been brought to an extremity of richness by Wagner, or of subtlety by Debussy, new composers have to go back to the age of counterpoint, or beyond to the beginning of rhythm, to find a fresh start.

We only protest when they begin to deny the value of past achievement. If I admire Cezanne, must I never take pleasure in Botticelli again? I might even like to look at Raphael occasionally. If the piano has been used to imitate a violin, must it now be reduced to mere percussion? Contemporary dramatic criticism may feel rightly that Shaw, once the dragon-killer who cleared the London stage for Ibsen, is now himself a menace, his intellectual drama of ideas sucking the life-blood of glamor and illusion from the theater, but that does not make it necessary

to say, as Ernest Milton did, that "Shaw has done great damage to the theater." Should we tear our hair and cry, "Why does Beethoven always develop his themes?" accusing him of stupidity. Beethoven must have thought his line of development was an improvement over going round and round. I may feel that putting up Gothic cathedrals in modern America for Protestant sects is worthless insincerity, but that does not prompt me to shy a rock at the rose-window of Chartres. As soon as we see the imperfection of our latest achievement, must we smash it, so that we will have only a trail of wreckage as our cultural heritage?

It is the recurring change of direction that keeps us alive, but each time that we are confronted with the old truth that there is no gain without some loss, we cry out that we have been robbed.

History now and then accomplishes what the revolutionists desire, a nearly complete destruction of the past. But the new culture that grows is preceded by dark ages. We can only face that prospect when we have no possible future but suicide. It would seem from a book like Henry Cowell's "New Musical Resources," (developed from a historical conception into a logical future, as is the method of the great radicals) that we have a good many hundred years to go with material now on hand before we need such a catastrophe.

III

We are much concerned these days with originality, but great originality is arrived at by the necessity for solving the problem the artist has set himself. It is not achieved by trying to do something, no matter what, so long as it has not been done before. Composers who broke new trails even had their beginnings in what surrounded them. If you happen in when someone has the records of the hunting scene in *Tannhäuser* on his phonograph, and they are new to you, it is quite possible that you might wonder whose was the German opera with the Italian flavor, and hazard a guess at Von Weber. The gulf between *Coq d'Or* and the *Firebird* is not so wide to our view. Ibsen began his career writing poetic tragedy and produced a masterpiece of romantic drama before he developed his three-walled room. The bends in the road are not so sharp as we look back. We can hardly see Tchaikowsky's Violin Concerto as set off by a hard line from its predecessors. We wonder at the astonishment and protests of the past. Already Debussy is so customary to our ears that the piquancy of what was once novel is gone. On the other hand, Brahms is not decadent Beethoven. Radical and conservative music eventually merge and the only distinction left is that of good and bad.

Then why shut ourselves off from any good music? The mere matter of quantity would settle it for a phonophile. One could be narrow in days of limited concert-going. The phonophile has to have his hour a day and where in history will he find one generation, one school of one generation, to provide him with enough, and not go outside the category of the good?

This is not to say that a liberal listener receives all music with a bland acceptance. It is exactly this repeated comparison of old and new, romantic and classic, light and profound, that sharpens his critical faculty and adds to his enjoyment. Radicals tell us that to listen to modern music will wean us from the classic, but why should it? Modernity may spoil the Godards but it will not touch a Smetana. Nor have

we ever fully appreciated Beethoven's grand and simple structure till it has towered above the glamor of modern orchestration, nor felt the color of Moussorgsky quite so strongly as after Schumann.

We need everywhere more discrimination and less condemnation. Let each one make his own pattern of artists, penetrating to their peculiar qualities, ranking them in neat order, but not publishing his opinion and thus fixing it in a hard mould; it is a perfect puzzle for lie-awake nights, for it is never solved. Once we recognize that some artist must be placed in the top row for whom we have no instinctive personal preference, we have raised ourselves to a new level. We will be less likely then to glorify our prejudices, to say, "I can't listen to Mozart," "it's a personal insult to me to play Bach," "chamber music is a bore," or "I hate the organ."

We make such outcry over deprivations that are forced upon us. Why should we then close the door on any of the treasures of the world that are offered to us without even an inheritance tax?



Recorded Programs

[Such a vast quantity of good music is now available for the phonograph that quite frequently records of more than ordinary merit are overlooked. It will be the purpose of this page to call attention to such records. Readers are invited to send in their suggestions. Records which appeared prior to the appearance of Disques and hence have never been reviewed in these pages will be given preference. All types and makes will be considered, and an effort will be made to avoid the hackneyed and excessively familiar.]

BRAHMS

"Die Mainacht" & "Sapphische Ode"

Maria Olszewska (Contralto) with piano accompaniment by George Reeves.

[One 10-inch disc (V-E546). \$1.50]

Richard Specht, in his life of Brahms, speaks of the "moonlit, love-whispering *Mainacht*"—perfect descriptives. It is of interest to note that the last word of *Sapphische Ode* is "Tränen," which is also the last word of Schubert's *Am Meer*, and that Brahms consciously adopted the famous ending of the latter for his own now almost equally famed song . . . Olszewska's contralto is here about the most sensuously beautiful that I have ever heard. Her diction is the weakest feature of her work . . . The recording is excellent. Some may feel that the piano was too far from the microphone, but for me it provides just the right atmosphere of hushedness for both songs.

R. W. S.

WOLF

"Anacreons Grab" & "Schlafendes Jesuskind"

John McCormack (Tenor), with piano parts performed by Edwin Schneider.

[One 10-inch disc (V-DA1170). \$1.50]

In reviewing the Wolf Society Album No. 1, it was hinted that McCormack would be a logical artist for the second series. This disc is evidence of the quality of his Wolf, for anyone who may be inclined to doubt the ability of the singer of *Sonny Boys* and *Jeannines* to do justice to Wolf's genius . . . Some seasons ago Victor released a recording of the second song, coupled with an old *Minnelied*. However, the Wolf song was with orchestra, and even though Wolf's own orchestration was probably used, I like better the present recording with piano . . . Both songs are exquisite. *Anacreons Grab* (Goethe) conveys an ineffable sense of peaceful rest of the old Greek poet; *Schlafendes Jesuskind* (Mörike) pictures a moment of ecstasy before the sleeping Babe . . . The recording is satisfactory.

R. W. S.

WAGNER

"Parsifal": Transformation, Grail & Flower Maidens Scenes

Bayreuth Festival Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Karl Muck.

[Five 12-inch discs (C-67364D to C-67368D). From Columbia Set No. 79. \$2 each]

These are among the most successful Wagnerian records ever made, and this in spite of the fact that they are now about five years old. Great advances have been made in the art of recording since the Bayreuth Festival of 1927, when these selections were recorded, but there are not many modern records that are appreciably better recorded. The purely orchestral Transformation Scene, from Act 1, is a magnificent piece of interpretation and is one of the finest discs Muck has given us; the recording is similarly excellent. In the Grail Scene, the clarity and balance of the fine, bold recording of the chorus are particularly notable. The principal trouble with the Grail and Flower Maiden Scenes is that not enough of them is given. The endings are rather abrupt. The Transformation covers two sides, the Grail six and the Flower Maidens two. It is hardly possible that any collector of Wagnerian records is not familiar with these superb discs; they belong in all collections, as indeed do the other records in the album which contain more excerpts from *Parsifal* and various excerpts from *Siegfried*, *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*.



ORCHESTRA

GROFÉ

V-36052

to

V-36055

GRAND CANYON *Suite*. Eight sides. Paul Whiteman and his Concert Orchestra.

Four 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set C-18. \$5.50.

V-L35001

and

V-L35002

GRAND CANYON *Suite*. Four sides. Long-playing version.

Two 12-inch long-playing discs. \$2.25 each.

Ferdie Grofé, who will be remembered for his share in the scoring of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, is one of the salient characters in the field of what is called—none too happily—symphonic jazz. His knowledge of orchestration has won him a unique place in this field, and he has also something of a reputation as a composer. He was born in 1892 and came of a musical family. His grandfather, a 'cellist, shared the first desk at the Metropolitan Opera House with Victor Herbert, and later was solo 'cellist with the Los Angeles Symphony Orchestra; his uncle was concert master of the same band, and Grofé himself, when old enough, also became a member of the orchestra, playing viola. His parents, however, decided that the family was already sufficiently musical, and so Grofé was compelled to accept jobs as a bank clerk, a bookbinder, and a printer, none of which appealed to him. So he returned to music, wandering around the country playing piano, violin or viola at dances, at the movies, and at mining camps. In 1920, returning to Los Angeles, he obtained a job in Paul Whiteman's Orchestra at the Hotel Alexandria. Whiteman at that time was endeavoring to make jazz more palatable and acceptable to civilized ears, and Grofé, it appeared, had some excellent ideas as to how this could be accomplished.

So he became the arranger of the Whiteman band, and in this capacity was responsible for many of the successes of the orchestra. His part in the launching of the *Rhapsody in Blue*, though at first overlooked, was soon recognized and won him wide attention. "He [Grofé] may be said fairly to have originated, on the afternoon of February 12, 1924, a school of jazz arrangement," says Dr. Goldberg in his book on Gershwin. In recent years Grofé has been active as a composer, and among his compositions are: *Broadway at Night*, *Mississippi Suite*, *Three Shades of Blue*, a fantasy called *Metropolis* and this *Grand Canyon Suite*. Of these, the last four have all been recorded for Victor by the Whiteman organization.

The *Grand Canyon*, the longest and most ambitious of his works, is the result of a visit of the composer to that region. It is in five parts. Mr. Grofé begins with a sunrise and concludes with a cloudburst; in between are sections supposed to be descriptive of Painted Desert, On the Trail, and Sunset. The trouble with this music is that we have heard so much of it before—not, to be sure, in the ingenious and clever guise in which it is here presented, but nevertheless in forms similar enough to detract greatly from the originality of the *Suite*. But if the work cannot be termed a masterpiece, or anything remotely approaching a masterpiece, and if it suggests Broadway more strongly than it does the West, the best

parts of it can at least be called highly entertaining music. Sunrise, the first movement, essays to describe this daily phenomenon, but only with moderate success; it seems labored and forced. Painted Desert, the next part, is much better and has some striking effects. But the third section, On the Trail, is far more successful, and indeed is easily the most effective part of the five. This section, recalling Gounod's *Funeral March of a Marionette* and, more strongly, Dukas' the *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, has humor, movement, bounce and charm. Nor is it without pathos. Suggesting a trip along one of the dangerous paths of the region, it begins with a fancy violin solo—well played and recorded, incidentally,—but once this is over, the music becomes far more original and witty. The steady pounding of the horses' hoofs, the lugubrious hee-hawing, the cowboy song—inserted with a great deal of skill—and the tinkling of a music box, indicating the approach to a frontier roadhouse: these are some of the features of this section, and they are worked into the piece with fine taste and ingenuity. Sunset, the following movement, tries to describe in sound another daily phenomenon, and is reminiscent in places of the same composer's *Mississippi Suite*. The last movement, Cloudburst, is notable mainly for the impressive din that Mr. Whiteman's orchestra and the recorders have managed to get on the records. It also makes skilful use of the cowboy song.



The work was recorded only recently at Camden, while the Whiteman band was playing an engagement at a Philadelphia theatre. The organization, for the recording, was augmented by ten members of the Philadelphia Orchestra. The performance is a deft, full-flooded one. Mr. Whiteman's band may have lost its once secure position as the leading dance orchestra, but in the field of concert jazz it still reigns supreme. Such striking and colorful effects are obtained by these musicians that one is often fooled into believing that perhaps there is more in the music than is actually there. Mr. Grofé's skilfully played and beautifully recorded score would make excellent material for the moving pictures. It is available in both standard and long-playing versions: in both the recording is nothing less than magnificent.

LEHÁR
C-50324D

{ THE MERRY WIDOW: *Selections*. Two sides. Columbia
Concert Orchestra conducted by Clarence Raybould.
One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

The music from Lehár's always delightful operetta can usually be counted upon to make an enjoyable record. Here most of the principal tunes are to be heard, briskly played by a competent orchestra. The recording is excellent.

SKRYABIN
V-L11616
and
V-L11617

{ POEM OF ECSTASY and PROMETHEUS, Opp. 54 and
60. Four sides. Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold
Stokowski, with Sylvan Levin (Piano) and Chorus from Curtis
Institute of Music. Two 12-inch long-playing discs. \$3 each.

Both of these works were reviewed by Mr. Laurence Powell in the last issue of *Disques*, and the standard records have been available for several months. The long-playing versions were not copied from the standard discs, but were recorded separately. They seem every bit as well recorded as the standard discs.

**BEETHOVEN**

C-LX160

IMPORTED

LEONORE *Overture No. 1.* Two sides. Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra conducted by Willem Mengelberg.
One 12-inch disc. \$2.

There are plenty of recordings of the *Leonore No. 3*, but this seems to be the first time No. 1 has found its way to the phonograph turntable. Though listed as No. 1, it is actually the third of the four pieces Beethoven wrote for his opera, *Fidelio*. What is now known as the *Leonore No. 2* was written for the original production of the opera in 1805; the great, and perhaps somewhat too familiar, No. 3 was prepared for the revival the following year; and No. 1, here recorded, followed for a performance (which never took place) in Prague in 1807. The little *Fidelio* Overture which Blech and the Berlin State Opera Orchestra play on a 10-inch Victor record was written when Beethoven revised the opera for the final time in 1814. No. 1 is somewhat less imposing than No. 3, but it has the same general characteristics that mark the latter. The finale is scarcely less impressive and stirring than that in the more familiar work. This recording is a felicitous one, and ranks with the finest achievements of the Concertgebouw Orchestra. Last month the same orchestra and conductor gave us rather unsatisfactory versions of Weber's *Freischütz* and *Euranythe* Overtures, but the blurred reproduction that marred those discs is nowhere noticeable in this record. It is clearly and firmly recorded, and the carefully planned and executed interpretation leaves little to be desired.

MOZART

V-DA4400

IMPORTED

DIVERTIMENTO No. 6 in C for 2 Flutes, 5 Trumpets and 4 Kettledrums. (K. 188) Two sides. Members of Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech.
One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

This Divertimento, like the Divertimento No. 9, issued a few months ago and reviewed in the February issue of *Disques*, belongs to a group of ten such works written for various combinations of wind instruments. It was composed during the years 1776 and 1777. Compositions for wind instruments—then called *harmoniemusik*—were immensely popular in Mozart's day, and he did his share in supplying the public with these works. This one is short but jolly, and the playing and recording are on a high level of excellence.

WAGNER

B-90231

LOHENGRIN: Prelude. Two sides. Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler.
One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 39.

Brunswick has already repressed one Polydor recording of the *Lohengrin* Prelude—the Max von Schillings version—but apparently the company deemed the Furtwängler too good to be withheld. It is a superb record, with beautiful work from the strings. The splendid outburst of the brass on the second side is achieved with magnificent effect. The recording is very fine. The imported pressings of the record arrived in this country a little over a year ago and were noticed in the June, 1931, issue of *Disques*.

DEBUSSY

V-DB4817

and

V-DB4818

IMPORTED

LE MARTYRE DE SAINT SÉBASTIEN: *Symphonic Excerpts*. Four sides. Société des Concerts du Conservatoire conducted by Piero Coppola. Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.



This music is a suite taken from Debussy's score for Gabriele d'Annunzio's "mystery" in five acts, *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien*. The work was performed for the first time in Paris, May 20, 1911, with Ida Rubinstein impersonating Saint Sebastian and André Caplet conducting. Later a symphonic suite was culled from the score, and the following movements—all given on these records—comprise it: The Court of Lilies, Dance of Ecstasy and Finale of the First Act, The Passion and The Good Shepherd. A little less than a year after the first performance in Paris, Kurt Schindler performed various excerpts from the score in concert form in New York, and prior to the performance gave a lecture on the work, from which the following quotation is taken:

The subject of the work is the half-historic, half-legendary figure of St. Sebastian, whose martyrdom d'Annunzio and Debussy proposed to depict in what they termed a revival of the miracle play of the Middle Ages . . . The historic Sebastian lived 300 years after Christ, at the time when the Roman Empire with its vast dominions in the East had absorbed much of the Oriental influences and customs. The Emperor Diocletian, famous for his persecutions of Christian martyrs, wishing to increase his glory, had assumed the attributes of Asiatic divinities, and surrounded himself with the various cults of the East. Sebastian was the chief of the imperial archers, chosen for their agility from the youth of the city of Emesus, in Syria. At heart he was secretly a Christian, and had made many converts, and when the twin brothers, Marcus and Marcellianus, had been condemned to die because of their faith, Sebastian encouraged them to hold to their belief and to meet the death of martyrdom. This came to the ears of the Emperor, who summoned Sebastian to Rome, and finding him firm in the Christian faith, Diocletian condemned the young archer to be bound to a tree, and shot to death by his own archers.

Divorced from the play, the music of course loses some of its effectiveness, but for all that it was eminently worth while recording. There are passages of the utmost beauty and expressiveness. So competent a critic as Emile Vuillermoz, indeed, has said that the work "is a masterpiece which has not yet been revealed. It is wholly to be discovered." The performance here is a sensitive, properly subdued one, and the recording is a capital piece of work.

PFITZNER

PD-95459

to

PD-95461

IMPORTED

PALESTRINA: *Preludes to Acts 1, 2 and 3*. Six sides. Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Hans Pfitzner. Three 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 687.

There were early electrical Polydor records of this music, likewise conducted by the composer, but presumably the new records are better. Certainly, the recording throughout the six sides is very fine and impressive. Pfitzner, outside of Germany, is regarded with respect but hardly with much curiosity. But in his own country, where he is considered the most representative of German composers and an extreme nationalist, he receives his full share of veneration. This



has been carried to such lengths that his *Das Herz*, recently introduced at Berlin and Munich with small success, is nevertheless making the rounds of the German opera houses—and this at a time when the German opera stage is in great difficulties.

Palestrina, his best known work, was first produced at Munich in 1917, and since then has been given throughout Germany with, as Grove's puts it, "becoming solemnity." Pfitzner's friends are said to consider it another *Parsifal*; others believe it to be a work of unsurpassed dullness. The libretto was prepared by Pfitzner himself. It has been pointed out by various authorities that in the opera Pfitzner has identified himself with the hero, Palestrina. The opera, which requires over three hours to present, has to do with Palestrina's sorrow after his wife's death, the renewal of his inspiration, a committee meeting of the Council of Trent, and, at the end, the final triumph of Palestrina's music. The Prelude to Act 1 deals with the hero; that to Act 2 with the Council; and that to Act 3 with the triumph of the composer. The first and last are austere; to many ears—including ours—they may seem harsh, cold, forbidding, altogether uninteresting. The second is tumultuous and troubled—here, incidentally, there is some very realistic recording. The music is not likely to be very popular. But if you are at all curious about Pfitzner, then here are three splendidly recorded and played discs.

HONEGGER { PRÉLUDE POUR "LA TEMPÊTE": *Symphonic Movement*.
C-G17026D { Two sides. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Arthur Honegger.
One 10-inch disc. \$1.

More storm music, conducted by the composer and moderately well recorded. The disc was noticed, from the imported Odeon pressing, on page 403 of the November, 1931, issue of *Disques*.

WAGNER { GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG: *Funeral Music*. Two sides. British
C-68044D { Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bruno Walter.
One 12-inch disc. \$2.

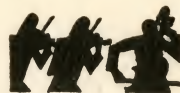
Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 125.

So far as recording alone is concerned, this is easily the best version of the so-called Funeral March from *Götterdämmerung*. Some may prefer Coates' interpretation, or possibly Muck's, to Walter's. But Walter manages to make it sound very impressive. The disc was reviewed, from the imported pressing, in the May *Disques*.

R. STRAUSS { "DER ROSENKAVALIER" SUITE: (a) *Presentation of the*
V-11217 { *Silver Rose*; (b) *Ochs Waltz*; (c) *Breakfast Scene and Trio*;
and { (d) *Closing Duet*. (R. Strauss-Arr. Nambuat) Four sides.
V-11218 { Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Carl Alwin.
Two 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

The charming music given on these records was taken from Strauss' *Rosenkavalier*, a work too seldom heard and too meagrely represented on records. The above two discs arrived in this country several months ago and were noticed in the May *Disques*. Now they appear under the Victor label.

CHAMBER MUSIC



BRAHMS

C-68045D

to

C-68048D

QUARTET IN A MINOR, Op. 51, No. 2. Eight sides. Léner String Quartet.

Four 12-inch discs in album. Columbia Set No. 173. \$6.

Miniature Score: Philharmonia Score No. 373.

There have been fewer Brahms recordings than usual of late, so that not many collectors will feel inclined to dispute the placing of this album in the front rank of the month's releases. The Quartet in A Minor, Op. 51, No. 2, has been recorded before, by the Buxbaum String Quartet for Polydor, but there is ample room for another recording of the work, especially for one so well turned out and beautifully recorded as this set. Under the domestic Columbia label, moreover, the new version will naturally enjoy a much wider distribution than the old imported recording. It is in every way a satisfying album, and should appeal equally to the novice and the seasoned listener.

Of Brahms' string quartets, only that in C Minor, Op. 51, No. 1, seems to have escaped the attention of the recorders, and no doubt it, too, will soon be recorded. The Quartet in A Minor, like its companion in C Minor, was dedicated to one of Brahms' closest friends, Dr. Theodor Billroth of Vienna. The work, although composed earlier, was not published until 1873. The Quartet itself is a beautiful one, filled with a tenderness, a freshness and a spontaneity that are genuinely Schubertian. The reticence and restraint of the Piano Quintet in F Minor, Op. 34, give way here to an unrestrained eloquence and warm flow of melody that once again disprove the old claim that Brahms was harsh, cold and inaccessible. The Quartet in A Minor has all the warmth and poetry of the Quartet in B Flat Major, Op. 67 (also recorded by the Léners), but it is better balanced than the later work, for it has a healthy vigor and strength that are missing from the Op. 67 Quartet. The first movement, with its principal theme based on the Joachim-Brahms motto, F.A.E. (*Frei aber einsam*), is broadly sweeping, but it is not without its sorrowful moments. The lovely slow movement is thoughtful and impassioned; the subsidiary theme which is used to lead the way back to the quiet mood of the opening section is similar to the wonderful oboe tune in Strauss' *Don Juan*, quoted also in *Ein Heldenleben*. The third movement begins with a minuet which is followed by an allegretto vivace section in 2/4 time. The minuet tempo returns, and then the two themes are combined, the first violin playing the allegretto melody while the second violin plays the minuet theme. The movement closes with the minuet. The effect, however, is curiously sombre and mysterious rather than light and gay, as one might expect of a minuet. A Czardas dance tune serves as the leading melody of the vigorous Finale.

Recording and performance are worthy of the lovely music. It is one of those rare sets: an album that can be returned to again and again with undiminished pleasure.



**RAVEL
DEBUSSY**

V-L903

and

V-L904

IMPORTED

INTRODUCTION AND ALLEGRO. (Ravel) Denise Herbrecht (Harp) with string quartet, flute and clarinet accompaniment conducted by Piero Coppola. Three sides and ARABESQUE. (Debussy) One side. Denise Herbrecht (Harp). Two 12-inch discs. \$1.75 each.

Miniature Score: Durand et Cie.

This work is one of the few examples of modern music that was recorded back in the acoustical days. Long before records began to offer something that could, above the scratch and blast, be recognized as music, Columbia issued the Introduction and Allegro. But it required an agile imagination for the hearer to decide for himself that the tortured sounds issuing from his acoustical machine were really a performance of Ravel's Septet. Later, after the electrical process had firmly established the value of the phonograph, H.M.V. issued the work in a version played by the Virtuoso String Quartet, J. Cockerill (harp), R. Murchy (flute) and C. Draper (clarinet). The records—fairly good ones—were later repressed by Victor and issued on one of its special lists of foreign repressings. The Introduction and Allegro is surely one of Ravel's most attractive works in the smaller forms. Its brilliance and charm, its rich coloring, the skilful writing for the harp and the effective parts for the woodwinds and strings—all this makes for music that is singularly appealing. There is, in addition, a wealth of melody in the piece, so that it is very easy to listen to. This new recording, from France, is better than the early version. Mlle. Herbrecht is obviously a skilful performer, and she negotiates the work with ease and assurance. The other performers, too, are admirable; their names ought to have been included on the record labels. The music, of course, is the sort that lends itself readily to the phonograph, and the recorders did not miss the fine opportunity afforded them. Better harp reproduction has seldom been heard from records, and the whole thing, in fact, is notable for its clarity, refinement and good balance. The Debussy *Arabesque*, played by Mlle. Herbrecht on the odd side, is delightful, and the recording is again beautifully done.

**SCHUBERT
REGER**

V-DB1521

to

V-DB1523

IMPORTED

GRAND FANTASIA in C Major, Op. 159. (Schubert) Five sides and

SONATA IN F SHARP MINOR: *Allegretto*. (Reger) One side. Adolf Busch (Violin) and Rudolf Serkin (Piano). Three 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

This is one of the works that escaped the attention of the recorders during the recent Schubert centennial activities, when the bulk of the Schubert recordings that are now available appeared. Nor has the Grand Fantasia since been issued, so that, as far as we are aware, this is the first recording of the work. Outside of Kreisler and Rachmaninoff—who gave us the fine recording of the Sonata in A Major—one could think of no team better fitted to record the Grand Fantasia than Adolf Busch and Rudolf Serkin, who have already made so many notable recordings. Their version of the Brahms Sonata in G Major, Op. 78, a recent Victor release, will be gratefully remembered.

The Grand Fantasia is in three movements: Allegretto, Andantino, and Allegro-Allegretto-Presto. More delightful and vivacious music would be hard to imagine. The Allegretto, after a short introduction of rather melancholy beauty, soon gives way to music of the utmost charm and gayety. The melodies are well turned and graceful, and the writing for the violin and piano is exceedingly effective, giving each instrument equal prominence. The whole thing flows easily and spontaneously, straight from what is called the heart. The Andantino also has a grave introduction, and though it too has some animated passages, it is more subdued and restrained than the preceding movement. The final movement is full of vigor and grace and makes a fitting close.



The interpretation is a beautiful piece of work. Busch and Serkin always work together extremely well, and here they are both at the top of their form. The former's talents are well known, owing to his recent visit to this country, but the latter is no less accomplished an artist. His piano accompaniment, indeed, is one of the features of the set. The piano part is as important as that of the violin in this work, and Serkin negotiates it with impressive ease and facility. The recording is well balanced and clear. . . . The movement from the Reger Sonata, which occupies the odd side, is enjoyable. It would be pleasant to have the whole work recorded.

PIANO



HANDEL
V-DA4401
IMPORTED

{ CHACONNE. Two sides. Edwin Fischer (Piano).
One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

This appears to be Edwin Fischer's recording début, and it is a highly successful one. Born in Basle in 1886, he received his education there, later studying at the Stern's Conservatory in Berlin. He has been a teacher there since 1905. The Electrola supplements have been making an ecstatic fuss over the disc, hailing it as "Eine sensation in der musikwelt!" That may be a little excessive, but it is nevertheless a delightful record, admirably played and skilfully recorded. The music is charming.

ALBÉNIZ
C-2659D

{ SEGUIDILLAS. One side and
ORIENTALE. One side. Ricardo Viñes (Piano).
One 10-inch disc. 75c.

Ricardo Viñes playing Albéniz would be an attractive combination at any reasonable price, but at 75 cents it is unquestionably a rare bargain. Both the Albéniz pieces are from *Chants d'Espagne*—which consists of five pieces—and both are immensely attractive. *Orientale* is a slow-moving, graceful piece, while *Seguidillas* proceeds at a livelier and gayer pace. They are beautifully played and fairly well recorded.

**BEETHOVEN**

PD-90184

to

PD-90186

IMPORTED

SONATA IN C MINOR ("*Pathétique*"), Op. 13. Six sides.
Wilhelm Kempff (Piano).
Three 10-inch discs. \$1.25 each.

PD-95465

to

PD-95467

IMPORTED

SONATA IN A FLAT MAJOR, Op. 26. Six sides. Wilhelm
Kempff (Piano). Three 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

PA-E11189

and

PA-R1116

and

PA-R1117

IMPORTED

SONATA IN D ("*Pastoral*"), Op. 28. Six sides. Karol Szreter
(Piano). One 12-inch disc: \$2. Two 10-inch discs: \$1.25 each.

The recent announcement of the formation of the Beethoven Piano Sonata Society by H.M.V. seems to have renewed the companies' interest in the composer's piano works, and as a consequence we are now enjoying a mild flood of these sonatas. It is almost uncanny the way the companies seem to think of the same thing at the same time. Last month there was a repressing of the Polydor *Waldstein* by Brunswick, and this month no less than three sonatas are issued. Fortunately, none of the sonatas listed above conflicts in any way with the first Schnabel album soon to be released, for the latter will comprise Opp. 78, 90 and 111.

The *Pathétique* has already been recorded in numerous versions, and Kempff himself, indeed, has recorded the work electrically. The records were early ones, but they were always well spoken of, and at the time they were considered quite a remarkable piece of piano reproduction. "The stormy pathos of Beethoven's youth," Paul Bekker has said of this Sonata, "which he gives us here, is quite unlike the pathos of his maturity. It was not born of suffering, of renunciation or of any great spiritual crisis. It springs from boyish pessimism and *Weltschmerz*, from the restlessness of youth, seeking it knows not what. Its keynote is not bitter experience, but bitter desire for experience. Feigned tragedy formed the style of Beethoven's earlier works, and the further he emerged from the world of foreboding dreams, the more real tragedy entered his experience, the less 'pathetically' was it expressed. His presentation of tragedy increased in grandeur and lost nothing in emotional impressiveness as he expressed it in a natural idiom, without the aid of 'pathos.' In the earlier work, however, he made artistic and conscious use of pathos to produce a certain effect and accordingly himself entitled his sonata *Pathétique*." This new recording is on three 10-inch discs instead of two 12-inch, as in the earlier Kempff recording. Kempff is always a reliable and satisfying, if not sensational, Beethoven performer, and his interpretation here is well considered and clean-cut. The recording is excellent.

The Sonata in A Flat Major, Op. 26, has already been recorded, too, and by Kempff himself. How the new version compares with the old one, we can't say, not having the latter at hand. But the new set is admirably done, good recording

and a revealing interpretation combining to make a first-rate set. This Sonata has for its third movement a funeral march and closes with a rondo.



As for Szreter's recording of the *Pastoral*, it is the least satisfying of all these recordings. The work itself justifies the title *Pastoral*,—given it by some publisher and not by Beethoven,—for it is calm, serene music, with none of the stormy emotional upheavals that are to be found in some of the other sonatas. Szreter's interpretation is little better than commonplace and lacks any distinguishing qualities. The recording, too, leaves something to be desired.

BEETHOVEN { SONATA IN F SHARP MINOR, Op. 78. Two sides. Wilhelm
B-85011 { Kempff (Piano). One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

This Sonata, unfortunately, will be duplicated in the first Beethoven Society album, soon to be issued. That fact will probably tend to limit the sale of this excellent little disc, which deserves a better fate. Whether the whole Sonata is contained on the two sides of the record we can't say, since the review copy arrived too late to check it with a score.

After having brought piano virtuosity to the highest point of which he was capable, Beethoven altered his style of writing for the instrument. "He no longer attempted to put it to great uses," Bekker says, "but, although he found the tone of the clavier too thin and flat to clothe his monumental imagination, he still recognized its intimate, expressive charm. It was more suited to a small circle of friends in a drawing-room than to a large audience in a concert-hall. Once more it became the most personal of instruments for chamber-music, perfect in miniature and *genre* pieces, for the expression of sentiment and humour. This conception resulted in a group of sonatas of a two-movement type, hitherto employed only in sonatinas. Such are Op. 54, Op. 78 and Op. 90."

The Sonata in F Sharp Minor, as Bekker says, consists of two movements: Adagio cantabile, Allegro ma non troppo and Allegro vivace. The first movement is serene and joyful; the second movement, by way of contrast, is more troubled. Kempff's interpretation is satisfactory, and the recording is well up to the high Polydor standard.

SCHUBERT { MARCHE MILITAIRE, in D Flat Major, Op. 51, No. 1.
LISZT { (Schubert.) One side and
B-90230 { VALSE IMPROMPTU in A Flat Major. (Liszt.) One side.
Alexander Brailowsky (Piano). One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

This is one of Brailowsky's less successful recordings. Brailowsky, a couple of years ago, won considerable phonographic fame through his Polydor records. Not only were they well played; the recording was infinitely superior to anything the other companies had to offer. Nowadays, of course, those records don't sound so remarkable. All the major companies have made great improvements in their piano recording, and in consequence the recorded pianoforte repertoire is now a fairly abundant one. Here Brailowsky plays pieces by Schubert and Liszt. Neither is of outstanding importance, and in neither is Brailowsky at his best. The recording, too, is not altogether satisfactory, being rather noisy.



OPERA

WEILL
V-EH736
IMPORTED

AUFSTIEG UND FALL DER STADT MAHAGONNY:
Querschnitt. Two sides. Lotte Lenja with chorus and orchestra
of Kurfürstendamm Theatre. One 12-inch disc. \$1.75.

The opera *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* had its origin in the Baden-Baden Festival of 1927, where five songs of Weill's, strung together into a short opera, were given. Collaborating with Bert Brecht, who wrote the libretto, Weill considerably expanded the work into an opera of twenty-one episodes, expressed in songs, some of them with English texts. In its new form the work was completed in November, 1929, and it was first presented at the Leipzig Opera on March 9, 1930. The first performance caused one of the most violent riots in the history of the German stage. Brecht's cynical and harshly realistic libretto deals with the imaginary city of Mahagonny, founded in America by three criminals. Here everything is allowed, "the place where 'everything goes.'" But the piece has a moral, and it appears when it is shown that Mahagonny, though otherwise unreservedly free, nevertheless has one thing in common with other cities: the money problem. Here as elsewhere one must pay for one's pleasures, and not to do so constitutes a grave sin. One of the characters, unable to finance his own way, is sentenced to die in the electric chair.

The immoderate excitement *Mahagonny* aroused at its first performance seems to have vanished today, but its creators are by no means forgotten, and they are held in great respect in Germany. In addition to their *Dreigroschenoper* (recordings of which have drifted to America) they have developed what they call the "school opera"—little works in the general musical style of the *Dreigroschenoper* intended for presentation by school children. The record listed above would have been more timely had it appeared a year or so sooner, but as it seems to be the only recording available from the opera it has an added value. Of the records we have had from the efforts of modern German composers—such discs as those giving selections from Mark Lothar's *Lord Spleen*, Krenek's *Johnny Spielt Auf* and Weill's *Dreigroschenoper*—this is the most interesting, and its interest is by no means merely a historical one. *Mahagonny* may or may not be a valuable contribution to musical art; that can scarcely be determined here. Whatever its merits may be, at all events, this record of excerpts provides some highly enjoyable music. There is charm and grace in Weill's tunes, and the accompaniments are effective. Weill's jazz differs widely from American jazz, of course, and compared to the best American efforts it seems extremely tame and mild; but there is really no valid reason why Weill's work should be condemned merely because his jazz and American jazz are very dissimilar. There are some excellent parts for the chorus, and the accompaniments, played by an orchestra consisting of strings, wind instruments, piano, saxophone and guitar, provide a colorful and lively background.

The performance appears to be a competent one, and the recording is up to the best Electrola standards.

BOITO

C-GQX10619

to

C-GQX10635

IMPORTED

MEFISTOFELE: Opera in 4 Acts, with Prologue and Epilogue.

Thirty-four sides. Italian Operatic Artists, La Scala Chorus conducted by Vittore Veneziani, and Milan Symphony Orchestra conducted by Lorenzo Molajoli.

Seventeen 12-inch discs in two albums. \$34.



Continuing its admirable series of Italian operas, the Italian branch of Columbia now offers Boito's *Mefistofele* in complete form, rendered by a cast that is composed largely of familiar names. The subject of Faust has fevered a good many composers, and already we have on records the conceptions of Berlioz (*Damnation of Faust*), Wagner (*A Faust Overture*), Gounod (*Faust*) and now Boito's work. One of the finest of them all, Liszt's *A Faust Symphony*, has as yet to appear.

Arrigo Boito (1842-1918) was as competent a poet as he was a musician, and indeed much of his fame rests upon his opera libretti, *Otello* and *Falstaff*, written for Verdi and considered by many to be the finest libretti ever written for Italian opera. Boito's fame as a composer derives almost solely from his *Mefistofele*. First sketches for the work were started in 1866—though he had long had the subject in mind for operatic treatment,—and after many interruptions the score was completed in 1868, when Boito was only twenty-six years old. The managers of La Scala accepted the work for production, and instantly Boito and his opera became the centre of a storm of controversy between the upholders of the old and the new music. When, on March 5, 1868, the first performance occurred, with the composer conducting, the theatre was filled with people who were either violently in favor of Boito or violently opposed to him. With an audience so prejudiced one way or the other, it is only natural that the public response to the first performance could hardly be said to constitute an accurate indication of the opera's merits. "That performance," Grove's records, "remains memorable in the annals of the Italian theatre on account of the extraordinary scene witnessed, and the violence, the passions, aroused in the audience by the work of a young artist of twenty-six. Boito's appearance at the conductor's desk was the signal for a warm demonstration of sympathy, and the conclusion of the prologue was again received with the greatest of enthusiasm. Strangely enough, the least traditional and most original part of the score had apparently won over even the partisans of tradition and routine. During the other acts, however, the opposition began to assert itself, and the unusual length of the opera played into their hands. The behaviour of the audience toward the end can only be compared to that of an exasperated crowd . . . The evening ended in a riot which continued in the piazza outside the theatre after the doors of La Scala had been closed. Two more performances of *Mefistofele* were given during the week, but the demonstrations continued, and the opera was finally withdrawn by order of the chief of the police."

Although considerably discouraged by the failure of *Mefistofele*, Boito still had faith in his work and resolutely set about discovering its shortcomings. He made a number of revisions, and seven years later the work, in its altered form, was again produced, but this time made a profound impression. Since then it has been one of the most popular of all operas in Italy, but in other countries it is somewhat less well liked. Boito's literary skill served him in good stead in preparing the score, and his work, like Goethe's on which it is based, deals with the antagonism between good and evil.



The music is often highly expressive and eloquent, and it is, of course, notably melodious. There are some very fine choruses, and in fact the best parts of the performance, to this reviewer, are the choral and orchestral portions. The soloists are somewhat less satisfactory. They sing with great fire and impetuosity, but too often the effect is one of confusion and noise, and in consequence the illusion that these are not estimable Italian singers whose voices we hear issuing from the microphone but Goethe's characters is rather hard to maintain. The Scala chorus sings superbly, and the Milan Symphony as usual gives an admirable performance. Finally, the recording is clean-cut and realistic.

SULLIVAN	{	THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD: <i>Comic Opera in Two</i>
V-11220		<i>Acts.</i> (Gilbert-Sullivan) Twenty-two sides. D'Oyly Carte
to		Opera Company.
V-11230		Eleven 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set C-17. \$16.50.

The Gilbert and Sullivan fan, always well treated by the phonograph companies, has surely had no adequate cause for complaint in the past couple of months. There has been a mild flood of Gilbert and Sullivan recordings recently, and best of all there has been enough variety to satisfy every taste and pocketbook. For purses sufficiently fat to stand the undue strain, practically complete performances have been offered of the *Gondoliers*, *Ruddigore* and now the *Yeomen of the Guard*, all recorded by the D'Oyly Carte people for H.M.V. And for more modest pocket-books, excellent abridged versions have been offered of the *Mikado* and *Pirates of Penzance* by the Civic Light Opera Company (only for long-playing machines, however), as well as a competent abridged set of *Yeomen of the Guard* and a less satisfactory set of the *Mikado* done by a Light Opera Company for Columbia.

So that most of the major Gilbert and Sullivan recordings now available are out under the domestic labels. With the exception of the recent recording of *Ruddigore*, Victor has now repressed all of the albums in the D'Oyly Carte Gilbert and Sullivan series, which now embraces nine operettas, eight of which are available from Victor. Representing a departure from the collaborators' previous methods, *Yeomen* was produced October 3, 1888, preceding *Gondoliers* by a little over a year. Both librettist and composer, it is said, regarded the work as their finest achievement, but not everyone will agree with them on that point. Perhaps it is closer to the truth to say that every time one hears a competent performance—or recording—of one of the major operettas it seems, for the time being, to be the best and most amusing. So that to attempt to pick favorites is a dangerous business, and you run the chance of disagreeing with yourself.

Less satirical and fantastical than some of the others, the *Yeomen* has more charm than malice in it. But it is full of delightful lyrics, some of which are very poetic, and the score Sullivan provided for Gilbert's libretto abounds with sparkling and graceful tunes. With its deft lines and engaging music, it is an altogether charming operetta, especially as it is rendered here by the always expert D'Oyly Carte people, who seldom leave much to be desired in their performances. Soloists, chorus and orchestra render their parts with the consummate ease and perfection that one has come to expect of the D'Oyly Carte people. Satisfactory recording rounds out another album irresistible to the G. & S. fan.

J. STRAUSS
V-EH725
IMPORTED

THE GYPSY BARON: *Potpourri*. Two sides. M. Wittrisch (Tenor), W. Domgraf-Fassbaender (Baritone), Leo Schuetzen-dorf (Bass), Irene Eisinger (Soprano), E. Ruziczka (Con-tralto), with orchestra and chorus conducted by Ernst Römer. One 12-inch disc. \$1.75.



**J. STRAUSS
MOZART**
C-G4068M

THE GYPSY BARON: *Saffi's Gypsy Song*. (J. Strauss) One side and
MARRIAGE OF FIGARO: *Cavatina of the Countess*. (Mo-zart) One side. Elizabeth Rethberg (Soprano) with Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Frederick Weissmann. One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

The charming potpourri record is splendidly presented. Johann Strauss' *Gypsy Baron* is not nearly so well represented in the catalogues as it should be, and the whole thing, at least in abridged form, should be recorded sooner or later. Polydor could make an attractive album of it to match its already issued *Fledermaus* abridged version. Here are gathered some of the most attractive tunes from the piece, sung by first-rate vocalists. Wittrisch is the tenor whose voice bears such a startling resemblance to Tauber's, and the other singers are well known. An excellent chorus, a good orchestra and admirable recording round out a delightful record. The label ascribes the arrangement of the selections to "Electrola," whatever that may mean . . . The Rethberg disc also contains some excellent singing. The *Gypsy Baron* selection is engagingly done, but the recording of the accom-panying orchestra is occasionally a little harsh . . . The Mozart piece is similarly well done, and here the orchestral part is somewhat better reproduced.

CHORAL



CARPENTER
V-L11608

SONG OF FAITH. Two sides. Chicago A Cappella Choir con-ducted by Noble Cain, with symphony orchestra and organ. One 12-inch long-playing disc. \$3.

Carpenter's *Song of Faith*, written for the Washington bicentennial, was released on standard records several months ago, and it was noticed in the May issue of *Disques*. When the standard records were made, long-playing discs of the per-formance were also taken. This is in accordance with the new policy of the RCA Victor Company to record all master-works both ways, so as to eliminate the necessity for dubbing, never a very successful experiment. The long-playing version of *Song of Faith* covers the two sides of one 12-inch record. The playing time is somewhat shorter than that in the early long-playing discs, but the recording is vastly improved. If anyone is still doubtful that the long-playing process has been cured of many of the defects that marred the early products, let him listen to this record. It is not only one of the best program transcriptions thus far issued, but it suffers in no way from a comparison with the standard version.

New Victor Releases

MUSICAL MASTERPIECE SERIES

Gurre-Lieder by Arnold Schönberg. Performed by Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, assisted by six soloists and three choruses . . . on fourteen double-faced 12-inch Victor Records Nos. 7524-7537 . . . and in automatic sequence Nos. 7538-7551 . . . including discussion by Dr. Stokowski on first record surface. In Album M-127 with booklet containing German text and English translation. List price, \$28.00. Also available on Long Playing Records Nos. L-11609-L-11615 in Album LM-127. List price, \$21.00.

Certainly you will want this remarkable album. It not only preserves the lovely music, but the occasion of its American première as well. When Leopold Stokowski presented *Gurre-Lieder* at the regular Philadelphia Orchestra concerts a recording apparatus was installed in the concert hall and the music was reproduced as the concert progressed. (Notice the applause just before the music begins on Record Two.) The composition is in the form of a Cantata, set to the German translation of Jacobsen's Danish poems, telling of the love of King Waldemar for Tove. Dr. Stokowski's discussion of themes on the first record surface will prove a constant source of informative entertainment . . . and will add materially to your enjoyment and understanding of the music. One of the most beautiful passages in the entire work is the song of the Wood Dove, sung by Rose Bampton, contralto, whose superb voice has recently won her entrée to the Metropolitan Opera Company. Altogether the composition is one of the most unique ever recorded . . . one that is replete with melody interpreted by splendid artists under Leopold Stokowski's inspired leadership . . . and preserved for all time on Victor records.

The Yeomen of the Guard by Gilbert and Sullivan. Performed by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company on eleven double-faced 12-inch Victor Records Nos. 11220-11230 . . . and in automatic sequence Nos. 11231-11241. In Album C-17 with libretto. List price, \$16.50.

The list of Gilbert and Sullivan operas now available on Victor Records increases constantly. The *Yeomen of the Guard* is not one whit less attractive than the operas previously released . . . the artists are well known members of the D'Oyly Carte Company . . . and, as usual, the recorded performance was made under the personal supervision of Rupert D'Oyly Carte. Better include this album in your repertoire of lighter entertainment.

RED SEAL RECORDS

Der Rosenkavalier — Orchestral Suite (Strauss-Nambuut). Played by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Karl Alwin on two 12-inch Victor Records Nos. 11217-11218. List price, \$1.50 each.

Serenade (H. Waldo Warner) and

Longing (Drdla). Played by Mischa Elman on 10-inch Victor Record No. 1567. List price, \$1.50.

Old Folks at Home (Foster) and *Long, Long Ago*. Sung by Mme. Amelita Galli-Curci on 10-inch Victor Record No. 1566. List price, \$1.50.



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V-L11609

to

V-L11615

GURRE-LIEDER. Fourteen sides. Long-playing version.

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Gurre-Lieder is reviewed in an article by Joseph Cottler, published elsewhere in this issue. As has been mentioned before in this place, the standard and long-playing versions were both recorded at the actual performances, the standard representing the Friday afternoon and Monday night concerts of the Philadelphia Orchestra and the long-playing the Saturday night performance. Both versions are superbly recorded, marred only by the badly chosen breaks. This fault is not nearly so pronounced in the long-playing version, of course; moreover, the latter is recorded just as well as the standard, showing that the long-playing process has undergone some drastic improvements in the past couple of months.

**GRETCHAN-
INOFF****WARLAMOFF**

C-50327D

THREE COSSACK SONGS: (a) *Blow, Oh Blow*; (b) *There's a Cloud of Dust*; (c) *A Little Red Berry*. (Gretchaninoff) One side and

THE RED SARAFAN. (Warlamoff-Jaroff) One side. Don Cossacks Choir conducted by Serge Jaroff. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

Absent some months from the Columbia lists, the Don Cossacks Choir returns to recording work in fine form. Here there are few of the tricks which this organization employs with such striking effect in some of its records (in fact, save for the whoops and whistles that conclude *A Little Red Berry*, there are none whatever), but instead the choir gives us some very beautiful singing. The basses show off to excellent advantage. The Gretchaninoff songs are attractive and are well sung, but the feature of the disc is the *Red Sarafan*, a moving piece movingly rendered. The recording is an admirable piece of work.

**GANNE
OFFENBACH**

C-G50326D

EXTASE. (Ganne) One side and

TALES OF HOFFMAN: *Barcarolle*. (Offenbach) One side. Emmy Bettendorf (Soprano), Karin Branzell (Contralto) with chorus and orchestra. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

RUBINSTEIN

C-G2658D

UNTERN STERNZELT (*Kamennoi Ostrow*). Two sides. Emmy Bettendorf (Soprano) with chorus and orchestra conducted by Otto Dobrindt. One 10-inch disc. 75c.

The Ganne *Extase*, mildly pleasing but of negligible importance, is sung by Emmy Bettendorf and a chorus, with orchestral accompaniment by Otto Dobrindt.



RELEASES FOR THE MONTH OF

J U L Y

- | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---|--|
| 90230 | { | <p>SCHUBERT—MARCHE MILITAIRE, D Flat Major, Op. 51,
No. 1. Piano Solo.</p> <p>LISZT—Valse IMPROMPTU, A Flat Major
Piano Solo.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ALEXANDER BRAILOWSKY</p> | } | <p>Recorded in Europe
PRICE \$1.50</p> |
| 90231 | { | <p>WAGNER—LOHENGGRIN—PRELUDE TO ACT I
Parts I and II</p> <p style="text-align: center;">THE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, BERLIN
WILHELM FURTWÄNGLER, Conductor</p> | } | <p>Recorded in Europe
PRICE \$1.50</p> |
| 85011 | { | <p>BEETHOVEN—PIANO SONATA, Op. 78. Piano Solo</p> <p>First Movement: Adagio cantabile
Allegro ma non troppo</p> <p>Second Movement: Allegro vivace</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WILHELM KEMPF</p> | } | <p>Recorded in Europe
PRICE \$1.25</p> |
| 85012 | { | <p>RICHARD STRAUSS—ZUEIGNUNG (Devotion)
Baritone Solo in German</p> <p>HUGO WOLF—ER IST'S (Song of Spring)
HEINRICH SCHLUSNUS
Piano Accompaniment by Franz Rupp</p> | } | <p>Recorded in Europe
PRICE \$1.25</p> |

Brunswick Records

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It is capably done, and the recording is good . . . In the familiar Barcarolle Emmy Bettendorf is joined by Karin Branzell, and Dr. Weissman directs the accompanying orchestra. The three contrive to make as fine a recording of this piece as we have yet heard . . . The Rubinstein *Kammenoi Ostrow* is familiar in orchestral form. Given as it is here, with soprano solo, chorus and orchestra, it is fairly effective, and the rendition is carefully done. The harp solos are played by Max Saal.



VOCAL



**FOSTER
BAYLY**
V-1566

{ OLD FOLKS AT HOME (Foster) One side and
LONG, LONG AGO. (Bayly) One side. Amelita Galli-Curci
(Soprano) with piano accompaniment. One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

A disc such as this, at one time in the development of the phonograph, would have caused a mild flurry among collectors. Its reception today is hardly likely to be as enthusiastic. Both songs, well loved ones, are competently sung, and *Long, Long Ago* has a piano accompaniment by the artist's husband, Homer Samuels.

CHAUSSON
PD-561051
IMPORTED

{ LE TEMPS DES LILAS. One side and
AMOUR D'ANTAN. One side. Germaine Corney (Soprano)
with accompaniment conducted by Jean Ibos.
One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

Ernest Chausson (1855-1899), one of the more prominent of Franck's pupils, has been rather overlooked by the recorders, though his *Poème* for violin and orchestra has been recorded by Enesco (with piano accompaniment, however). His career was abruptly closed by an unfortunate bicycle accident which resulted in his death. He contributed to most forms of music, but it was in his songs that he did his most original work. Melancholy characterizes many of his works, and it is present in these two extremely beautiful songs. *Le Temps des Lilas* ranks as one of his best, and *Amour d'Antan* is almost as moving. Both are capably sung by Germaine Corney, and the accompaniments are adequate, as is the recording.

**R. STRAUSS
WOLF**
B-85012

{ ZUEIGNUNG. (R. Strauss.) One side and
ER IST'S. (Wolf.) One side. Heinrich Schlusnus (Baritone)
with piano accompaniment by Franz Rupp.
One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

Scarcely a month passes by that this admirable team doesn't have a record or so on the lists. Moreover, Schlusnus and Rupp, when they record, appear to have some consideration for the record-buying public, for the music they select for their discs is invariably of a high quality. Neither of these songs is new to the phonograph, but both are beautiful examples of their respective composers' lieder writing. Schlusnus sings with his usual intelligence and taste, and Franz Rupp's accompaniments are models of what such things should be. The recording is skilfully done.

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BRAHMS: QUARTET IN A MINOR, OP. 51, NO. 2. This superb electrical re-recording of the Brahms A Minor Quartet is a major musical event. In no other of his quartets does the great Brahms reveal so masterfully his supremacy in chamber music writing. The deep, impassioned, full-throated first movement, the brooding sensibility of the second with its almost orchestral middle section, the daintily combined minuet and scherzo and the exultantly grave finale all stamp the work a production of genius. In the Léner Quartet we have a chamber

music organization of unexampled virtuosity; the performance throughout is worthy of the composition in its greatest moments.

Masterworks Set No. 173

Brahms: *Quartet in A Minor, Op. 51, No. 2. Léner String Quartet. In Eight Parts, on Four Twelve-Inch Records. \$6.00 with Album.*

WAGNER: GOETTERDAEMMERUNG: FUNERAL MARCH. We announce this month Bruno Walter's masterly reading of Siegfried's Funeral March from Goetterdaemmerung, designated by the distinguished music critic Lawrence Gilman "the mightiest death-song ever chanted for mortal or for God," played while the hero Siegfried, slain in the forest by Hagen, lying upon his shield, is borne by the horror-stricken vassals slowly through the twilight of the woods to his last resting place. Nothing more stupendously magnificent exists in all the music of Wagner.

Wagner: *Goetterdaemmerung: Funeral March. Bruno Walter and Symphony Orchestra. In Two Parts, on One Twelve-Inch Record, No. 68044D. \$2.00.*

HONEGGER: PRÉLUDE POUR LA TEMPÊTE—SYMPHONIC MOVEMENT FOR ORCHESTRA. Honegger must be reckoned one of the most interesting of modern composers; his work is individualistic in the highest degree and untainted by plagiarism. In 1922 he commenced the music for Shakespeare's Tempest, of which the Prelude has attracted world wide notice for its stark realism and elemental force in its tonal depiction of the fury of a hurricane on the sea coast; it is a masterpiece of descriptive writing, here presented under the baton of the composer.

Honegger: *Prélude pour la Tempête—Symphonic Movement for Orchestra. Arthur Honegger and Symphony Orchestra. In Two Parts, on One Twelve-Inch Record, No. G-17026D†. \$1.00.*



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"Magic Notes"

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**WARNER
DRDLA**
V-1567

{ SERENADE, Op. 20, No. 2. (H. Waldo Warner) One side and
LONGING, Op. 228. (Franz Drdla) One side. Mischa Elman
(Violin) with piano accompaniment by Carroll Hollister.
One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

These are insignificant trifles, hardly worth recording. Elman, of course, gives his usual smooth, polished performance, and the rich tone of his fiddle has been faithfully caught by the recorders.

VIOLONCELLO



**HAYDN
PIANELLI**
C-50325D

{ CONCERTO IN D MAJOR; *Adagio*. (Haydn) One side and
VILLANELLE from *Sonata in G Major*. (Pianelli—Arr. Sal-
mon) One side. Gerard Hekking ('Cello) and Maurice Faure
(Piano). One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

Gerard Hekking seems to be a newcomer to the domestic Columbia lists. Neither of these pieces affords him much opportunity to display his virtuosity, both being slow-moving and highly lyrical selections; but they reveal the artist as a thoroughly competent 'cellist. He draws a remarkably smooth and rich tone from his instrument. The recording is well done, as is the piano accompaniment supplied by Maurice Faure.

MISCELLANEOUS



HAYDN
PA-R1164
IMPORTED

{ JOSEPH HAYDN'S FLÖTENUHR *Playing His Original*
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Haydn lacked a phonograph, but in its place he had musical clocks, and here we have seven little tunes, written by Haydn, played on two musical clocks made in 1792 and 1793. They were made under Haydn's own instructions by the chief librarian of the Esterhazy family, Father Primitivus Niemecz. Haydn composed twelve pieces for each of them, and they played at every hour, a spring releasing the cylinders and setting in motion the little bellows. The tunes were produced by means of a range of flutes hidden underneath the clock. It is a charming little record, satisfactorily recorded, and offers the first indication that the companies are aware that the two hundredth anniversary of Haydn's birth was recently observed.

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CORRESPONDENCE



Suggestions for Recorded Programs

Editor, *Disques*:

As a suggestion for your department of "Recorded Programs" listing earlier records I nominate: Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben*, sung by Lotte Lehmann with orchestra; O-4806 to O-4809. This is the most exquisite performance conceivable. The orchestra accompaniment is not in the least objectionable (I think it is really only a trio with piano). The songs themselves are among the very greatest creations in the entire literature of the voice. The album is the most highly prized collection in my discothèque of over 1800 records. Whoever has missed these records has much to look forward to, if the purchase is made.

No adequate appreciation has ever been given by record critics to the masterly performance of the Brahms-Händel variations by Moiseivitch, which appeared first in H.M.V. and recently in Victor. As a piano teacher of many years' experience who has heard most of the great pianists, both here and abroad, I can say that these records embody the very greatest piano playing. A more authoritative, vital, colorful, emotionally gripping and technically adequate performance would be inconceivable. I play these discs over frequently for my piano class as a model for all piano-playing.

V. G. BREWSAUGH

Superior, Wis.

Finds Skryabin Discs Unsatisfactory

Editor, *Disques*:

The always anxiously awaited copy of *Disques* came a few days ago. I second the motion for more records of Bach-Stokowski transcriptions.

I hope your reviewer will try over again the new Skryabin releases—*Poem of Ecstasy* and *Prometheus*. I was quite surprised at your favorable review, as on my instrument they sound dull, lacking in sonority and detail, weak in the brass and lower strings. I should have thought them early electrical recordings.

My dealer tells me also that a number of

his customers have made criticisms similar to mine.

Perhaps next month you will have something on the new H.M.V. *Falstaff*. These records are, in my opinion, truly splendid.

HENRY R. HUBBARD

Plainfield, N. J.

A Plea from China

Editor, *Disques*:

We have heard that due to radio, victrolas and the like are not being used much and so there are thousands of good records collecting dust on the shelves of cabinets in American homes. Would you be kind enough to insert in one of your numbers of the magazine a plea for such to be sent out to us here in China? Doubtless the readers of *Disques* are not the kind of people who are allowing dust to collect on good records but they might know of such people.

Yenching University is a missionary institution with eight hundred students all of college or post-graduate grade. We have a department of music in which there are three full-time teachers and two half-time ones. Of the eight hundred students, one hundred take work in the department, there being five major students. We sing the *Messiah* every Christmas and plan to give the Brahms' *Requiem* in the Spring. The chorus consists mostly of Chinese students with a few faculty members to assist.

There might be some person or persons who could take us on as a little brother and help out our department. Surely there is no more effective way of uniting the East and the West than through music, the most international of the fine arts and the most democratic. Through the type of records which your magazine reviews we can do wonderful things in increasing the appreciation of the East for the best in the West. We hope we can find some warm friends in the U. S. A. for our work.

Anyone interested should get in touch with the undersigned at Yenching University, Department of Music, Peiping, China.

BLISS WIAN

Peiping, China.

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NEW MUSIC

DIVERTISSEMENT for Chamber Orchestra. By Jacques Ibert. Philadelphia: *Elkan-Vogel Co. (Durand)*. \$2.

This *Divertissement* consists of six movements to be played without interruption: Introduction, Cortège, Nocturne, Valse, Parade, Finale. It is scored for the usual chamber orchestra including piano and celesta and a battery of ten percussion instruments to be played by one player. Ibert is one of the few composers of the modern French group about whom no battles are raging, as his sense of tone-color seems to be instinctive and appeals equally to the savant and the ordinary music lover. We cannot do better than to quote the French critic André George in the *Chesterian*: "There is always about Ibert's music, as about his person, an air of good fellowship and delicate amiability that shows the artist of breeding. He pleases without trifling . . . His musical temperament expands with singular felicity in the orchestra, where he revels in the subtle management of exquisite sound-values . . . He is one of those who think orchestrally and do not compose at the piano, inflating their work afterwards in the scoring. If he had any difficulty, it would be rather that of making an arrangement for piano solo of his orchestral music." No serious student of modern orchestration can afford to be without a copy of this score, which is full of delightful humorous tunes and fine orchestral effects.

POÈME for Piano and Orchestra. By Piero Coppola. New York: *Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (Max Eschig Edition)*. \$3.20.

Those who have heard Coppola's recordings of his own compositions know what a master of orchestration he is, and the present *Poème* is no exception to the rule. It has the dimension of a piano concerto, since it is written in three distinct movements, but the term *concerto* cannot be applied to it, since the piano part is not written in a manner to show off the technical virtuosity of the performer, but is an integral part of the orchestra, sometimes accompanying the different solo instruments with beautiful figurations, occasionally playing by itself, but never monopolizing all the interest. Coppola is very fond of the whole tone scale which he uses frequently throughout the composition, but he

avoids any sharp clashes of tonalities and his modernism is of the mild variety.

QUATRE MELODIES pour chant et piano. By Claude Debussy. New York: *Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (Max Eschig Edition)*. 75c each.

These four songs, written in 1881-82 and now published for the first time, are entitled: *Rondeau* (Alfred de Musset); *Chanson d'un fou*; *Ici-bas* (Sully Prudhomme); and *Zephyr* (Th. de Banville). Although lacking the whole tone scale harmonies and some of the characteristics of the later Debussy, they are nevertheless fine examples of the impeccable harmonic taste of the master and his wonderful economy of means. The sense of sight is also gratified by the beautiful covers and type of the music, for which the publishers should be commended.

THREE SONATINAS for Piano, Op. 12. By W. Schebalin. New York: *Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (Universal Edition)*. \$2.50.

The three sonatinas are published in one volume as Op. 12, each consisting of very short movements with melodies and themes of a grotesque character but beautifully developed and thoroughly pianistic. Altogether a delightful album of miniatures by a new Soviet composer.

SONATA FOR PIANO No. 3. By Paul Kadosa. New York: *Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (Schott Edition)*. \$1.

Although not yet thirty years of age, Paul Kadosa is already considered to be in the front rank of Hungarian composers of the present day, and this Sonata is a good example of his masterly handling of form. It consists of one short movement (*presto con fuoco*) occupying only six pages, and the piano is treated mostly as a percussion instrument with loud staccato octave passages, deep bass motives, and complicated cross-rhythms. Kadosa is one of the few composers of the ultra-modern school who have a strong feeling for the peculiar resonance and tone-color of the keyboard and do not think in terms of the orchestra when writing for the piano.

MAURICE B. KATZ

BOOKS

THE CONCERT-GOER'S LIBRARY OF DESCRIPTIVE NOTES: Vol. IV. By Rosa Newmarch. New York: *Carl Fischer, Inc.* \$1.50.

The notes reprinted here were selected from the analytical programs written for the Queen's Hall Orchestra between the years 1908 and 1927, and include, in addition, some notes written for the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, the Choral and Orchestral Union of Glasgow, the Sheffield Musical Festivals and the Norwich Triennial Festivals. They constitute the fourth volume of the series. The notes deal with symphonies of Beethoven, Brahms, Elgar, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert and Tchaikowsky; overtures of Beethoven, Berlioz, Brahms, Glinka, Gluck, Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Rimsky - Korsakow, Rossini, Suppé and Weber; and concertos of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Liszt, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Tchaikowsky, Dvorák and Saint-Saëns. Most people will agree with the author when she says: "Undoubtedly the most profitable time to read descriptive notes is just before—or even just after—hearing the works. During the actual performance attention should be wholly concentrated on the music itself." The notes themselves are well written and informative. Such information as can be had here is easily accessible these days, but the little volume is nicely printed and bound and makes an admirable handbook for anyone beginning to collect records. Most of the works discussed have been recorded. It is hinted in the preface that a volume dealing entirely with modern composers will follow those on classical selections.

LONG-HAIRED IOPAS: *Old Chapters from Twenty-five Years of Music Criticism.* By Edward Prime-Stevenson. Florence, Italy: *Privately Printed.*

Reviewing Mr. Prime-Stevenson's volume can have little practical purpose, since it is privately printed and so is not available to the general reader. Since, however, the author was kind enough to send us a copy, and since the book itself is a fascinating, rambling sort of an affair, dealing with all sorts of subjects related to music, it is impossible to refrain from a few words of comment. A

retired music critic, Mr. Prime-Stevenson now spends most of his time in Europe. At Florence, Italy, he gives phonograph recitals, using a machine he calls the "American Orthophonic (Edison) Phonograph, 'Vicotrola,'"—a formidable and rather inclusive title for a phonograph. We have been privileged to see the printed programs for these recitals, and more satisfying and better balanced ones we have seldom encountered. "Long-Haired Iopas" is made up of essays written for numerous journals during the past twenty-five years. The author's wide information, his many interests and his keen observation, all set forth in a pleasant, old-fashioned, leisurely style, make delightful reading.

"COLUMBIA" E LE OPERE COMPLETE. Milan, Italy: *Columbia Graphophone Co., Ltd.*

This useful little volume, sent to us by the publishers, the Italian branch of Columbia, will be of value to the collector of complete operas, dealing as it does with the complete operatic albums that have been issued by the Italian Columbia Company. The book is divided into three sections: composers, artists, and the recordings. The first division, that of composers, contains excellent portraits and brief biographical sketches of Boito, Donizetti, Giordano, Leoncavallo, Lualdi, Mascagni, Ponchielli, Puccini, Rossini and Verdi—all of whom are represented by one or more albums of Columbia records. The second division, that of artists, contains portraits and biographical sketches of the various artists who participate in the Columbia operatic albums. The final section, that of the recordings, lists in detail, opera by opera, the discs of the complete Italian operas Columbia has recorded, together with brief notes on the works and composers. It is significant to note that there are now no less than twenty-one of these operatic albums, and that figure does not include the Massenet, Bizet and Wagner sets made elsewhere by other branches of Columbia. At the end of the book there are reproductions of autograph letters from Giordano, Lualdi, and Mascagni, all testifying to the excellence of the recordings of their operas.

